

A week in the life of an....

Army Recruiter

By Kathleen Welker

You don't join the Army to be a recruiter — in most cases, you don't even get to choose to be a recruiter, the Army chooses for you. But some sergeants, although they signed on to be MPs or infantry or tank crewmen or field artillery, find they have a flair for their detailed assignment as Army recruiters.

They may find they like working in Hometown, USA, rather than at an Army post. Some may think the autonomy of working alone on a goal is exhilarating. They may love the Army and enjoy telling the Army story to Kiwanis Club members or high school guidance counselors. Most successful recruiters

genuinely enjoy helping and mentoring young people through the tough choices they have to make. Many recruiters have found many positive benefits in their own lives from their Army experiences, and they want to share those good things with young people ... things like discipline, cooperation, teamwork and responsibility.

For the most part, recruiters also know the rest of the Army does not understand what they do and how they go about achieving their assigned mission. Let there be no doubt — recruiting is no cake walk! With a declining propensity to enlist among American youth of prime enlistment age, recruiting has be-

come harder than ever. An increased mission for FY 97 has further added to the difficulty of "providing the strength" for America's Army.

The average detailed Army recruiter is 31 years old, married with one or two children. Most are staff sergeants and 90 percent have had some college. This soldier came to recruiting duty from any MOS after 8-12 years of experience in the Army and has every intention of going back to the "real Army" when the assignment with the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is over. Upon graduating from the five-week Army Recruiting Course held at the Recruiting and Retention School, Ft.



cants) posted anywhere visible bring scores of inquiries to local recruiters and increased opportunities to tell the Army story.

- **School visits to teachers, counselors, and students, and may include formal presentations for assemblies or career days.** Some recruiters volunteer as coaches or mentors in their schools. USAREC has several programs designed for all students (whether they are interested in Army service or not); Stay in School, Stay off Drugs and Planning for Life will provide information and motivate young people to make the best possible choice for themselves in a variety of situations.

- **Center of influence (COI) visits to local business or civic leaders who may be able to direct qualified prospects to the recruiter and Army service.** Some COI visits may be structured as a presentation before a local group meeting (Kiwanis, Elk, etc.) or as informal as a friendly chat with the music store manager. A COI is anyone in the community who young people listen to or ask for advice, such as a minister or employer.

- **In-home appointments.** These are generally conducted in the evenings and in the applicant's home. A good recruiter will always try to convince an applicant's parents that Army service is good for their son or daughter.

- **Generally being visible and being accessible.** Many recruiters find wearing the Army uniform is sometimes enough to start a conversation and each conversation can lead to increased good will for the Army or a referral.

- **Delayed Entry Program (DEP) functions.** Young recruits who have signed a contract but have not yet shipped to a basic training site are in the Delayed Entry Program. In order to keep them motivated and interested in the Army for up to a year before they ship, recruiters are tasked with providing events and functions to educate and motivate these "soldiers in waiting."

Some detailed recruiters convert to cadre MOS 79R after their initial tour. Cadre recruiters are, on average, a few years older and most are sergeants first class. Guidance counselors at the MEPS are cadre recruiters, as are most of the recruiter-trainers and station commanders. The first officer in a recruiter's chain of command is the company commander, who could be in the local area or as

far away as a drive of several hours. Recruiting stations are located in virtually every town in the USA, as well as in Europe, South Korea and Japan (on U.S. military installations), in Puerto Rico and Panama and on American Samoa, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

Some Army Reserve recruiters are assigned to fill vacancies in local Troop Program Units (TPUs), and Health Care Recruiting Team members recruit for 22 separate medical specialties, including all Active duty and Reserve physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians and medical services officers. There are also recruiters for Reserve chaplains and technical warrant officers.

A detailed recruiter serves a three-year tour with USAREC and many believe it can take as long as a year and a half to really become established in a community. In many communities across the USA, there is no military installation nearby, so the Army recruiter is the Army in that town's eyes. This is why it is vital that each recruiter become a visible part of the community, to promote good will and understanding about

the Army and why a recruiter improperly can be so devastating. Recruiters volunteer in schools, sports, scouts, chambers of commerce activities and libraries; they serve as color guards and honor guards and escorts in local ceremonies.

This may sound a bit self-serving but USAREC's philosophy is that while recruiters provide the strength for America's Army, they also are nation-building from within our own society. Today's field recruiters are among the best NCOs in the Army. All have records of proven ability and potential and each must represent the finest traditions of the Army and military service. The Army's image and strength depends on the ability of Army recruiters to tell the Army story, to convince young people that Army service is to their benefit and in the best interests of our great nation. ■

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Jackson, SC, he/she was lucky enough to be assigned close to his/her requested location; in fact, some recruiters are assigned their own high school for prospecting.

Prospecting is the recruiting term for "going out and looking" for qualified applicants. And that's not easy. It takes, on average, 140 contacts for a recruiter to come up with one contract. (Each recruiter contacts approximately 234 young people each month). Prospecting takes many forms — a recruiter may spend most of the morning on Monday or Tuesday making phone calls to names on a high school list or a graduate list. Each list must be annotated with information gleaned from that call, whether the prospect was not at home, not interested, may be interested, or in the hospital with a burst appendix.

A recruiter may prospect for high school graduates at the local malls, shopping centers, fast food restaurants — anywhere unemployed or underemployed graduates may be working or just hanging out. Having finished high school, graduates may be looking for a more fulfilling life, a better paycheck, something exciting to do. To these prospects the Army can offer skill training, education benefits and money for college (the Army College Fund, the Montgomery G.I. Bill, loan repayment programs), adventure (such as airborne training or Ranger assignments or travel opportunities), accelerated promotions and enlistment bonuses and a chance to "do something important," which surveys say is still a critical factor in many decisions to join the military.

Even after a recruiter finds an interested prospect, that prospect may not be completely physically, mentally or morally qualified for Army service. Much of Wednesday and Thursday in the recruiting week is used to conduct appointments, during which the prospect (now officially an "applicant") is carefully "interviewed" to determine his/her suitability to the Army and to ascertain why this particular applicant might be a solid contract. During appointments, recruiters fill out multiple forms, a lengthy paperwork process that attempts to validate an applicant's qualifications to ensure each recruit has the best chance to become a good soldier.

Think about it — think about the

soldiers you have serving with you now, think about the kind of soldiers you want to serve with, whatever your assignment. Would you want soldiers with criminal records living next door to you in the barracks or with chronic medical problems that make them undeployable (when you are fully deployable) or with a reduced ability to accept training or discipline in a high-risk situation or training environment?

Assuming our recruiter convinces a prospect that he/she can get through basic training, the applicant must score decently on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery of tests. These test scores are vital in determining where otherwise-qualified applicants are placed within the Army's range of jobs. All applicants must score in the upper half of test scores just to enter the Army; then, Army guidance counselors place applicants in specific MOS training seats according to their test scores and the needs of the Army. Guidance counselors place a range of test scores in every MOS, so no one MOS gets more than its fair share of high or low scores.

(Note: It is a violation of USA-REC and Army regulations for a recruiter to "coach" an applicant for a test. Recruiters who are reported and proven to assist applicants in this manner are subject to disciplinary action.)

This initial testing is very important to the Army, as applicants with high scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (taken after the ASVAB) are known to have a better ability to learn new skills, retain and use what they learn, have fewer disciplinary problems during their tour of service and finish out their initial tour of duty as scheduled.

Applicants are taken on any day to the closest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) for this testing. Lucky recruiters have a MEPS nearby; but some recruiters drive for hours to get an applicant "on the floor" of the MEPS. Applicants must receive a physical exam from a Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) physician for a valid enlistment. Here the MEPCOM doctor performs a battery of tests (in-

cluding HIV and other communicable diseases), as well as conducts a lengthy medical history, to determine whether the applicant's enlistment would be beneficial for both the individual and the Army.

For example, a young woman may have had a radial keratotomy surgery to correct her vision, which she neglected to tell her recruiter about in her initial interview at the recruiting station. How-



ever, the MEPCOM physician will find it and will reject this applicant for military service. Why? Because RK surgery leaves multiple scars that are weaker tissue within an eye, and a soldier with RK scars may risk permanent loss of vision upon injury.

Most recruiters use Friday to catch up on their paperwork and administrative duties and perform mandatory training. But there are a number of recruiter responsibilities with no "assigned days" for performance. These include:

- **Posting the area.** This means putting up flyers and posters with information on Army opportunities and options. Recent increases in Army incentives (i.e., \$40,000 Army College Fund, \$65,000 Loan Repayment Program and \$12,000 enlistment bonuses for qualified appli-